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OUR NEXT DUTY
TO THE INDIANS.

BY

JAMES E. RHOADS.

PHILADELPHIA:
INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION,
No. 1316 FILBERT STREET.
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OFFICE, NO. 1316 FILBERT STREET,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

OUR NEXT DUTY TO THE INDIANS.

The passage of the bill giving lands in severalty to Indians has placed upon those who have advocated it, upon the people of the United States, and especially upon the Executive Department of the Government, a new responsibility. Everything that a wise benevolence can devise to adapt the Indians to the changed conditions in which they are placed should be carried out with vigor. In looking, then, to the immediate future, it will appear that the work to be done is chiefly one of ADMINISTRATION. Under the new law, Indian agents will have, in many instances, in addition to their present onerous duties, that of supervising the allotment of lands, and of seeing that the allottees are prepared for the time when the land will be theirs without restriction, to be held for use or parted with for trifles.

Special agents will also have to be appointed to execute the provisions of this bill. Hence the importance of right appointments in the Indian service, is, if possible, more grave than ever, and these appointments should be absolutely taken away from the old system that has proved so defective, and be made in conformity with the rules of civil service reform. Men of practical ability, of business training, and of conscientious uprightness, should be chosen. Whenever those uniting these qualities with experience in Indian affairs can be found they should be preferred for appointment, or, if in the service, they should be retained.

The removal of experienced and successful officers from any position in this department to make room for political aspirants, or the personal friends of such aspirants, is a folly and scandal that should be promptly abandoned by the nation.

In all the agencies, except, possibly, a very few of the smaller ones, the agent should have one or more thoroughly competent clerks, who can relieve him from the detail of accounts and the writing of business letters, so that he can give his energies to

the supervision of the varied interests intrusted to him. In every case the clerk should be one upon whom the agent can rely as a faithful aid in his endeavors to advance the welfare of the Indians of the agency.

A system of promotion from lower to more important stations in the service should be adopted, and whenever men who have gained experience are qualified, they should be advanced to fill its higher offices.

INDUSTRIES.—Farming, herding, transporting supplies or other industries in which Indians are now engaged upon their reserves should be fostered vigorously, and the pressure of necessity should be applied by the gradual withdrawal of rations, whenever it can be done without positive harm, to enlist them in these employments. Besides those now in operation, other forms of productive industry might be developed. Upon some reserves, supplies of salt, or of other mineral products, exist, and could probably be made to contribute to the good of the Indians, replacing indolence by labor and dependence by self-support.

Surely the Indians could care for cattle as well as for ponies, and ought, in many instances, to use their vast pasture lands for grazing to a far greater extent than at present. Tact and push could bring this about. The young people trained in the schools should be encouraged to form little colonies upon the best parts of reservations, and should be assisted in making houses for themselves, as Captain Lee is now doing for the Cheyennes and Arapahoes in the Seeger colony. The Indian police should be required to guard the premises of such settled Indians from the interference of rude fellows who hate to see civilization coming in, and wish to remain savages.

Many Indians should be permanently settled in white communities, as farm hands or in other employments.

DEFENSE OF INDIAN RIGHTS.—The power of the Government should be used with prompt decision to defend the rights of the Mission Indians, and of all others now assailed by unjust men. There can be no excuse for any administration that permits cruel injustice against the defenseless to go unchecked. It makes the whole nation a sharer in these crimes.

The agents should be enabled to perfect their police forces,

and to secure the protection of all Indian rights before the courts of the United States, or of the States and Territories.

To be subject to laws and courts will be but a punishment to Indians, unless the Government sees to it that the courts defend them as faithfully as they do the white citizen.

EDUCATION.—There should be a system of education in work, letters, manners, morals and religion that would aim to embrace the whole Indian population. The gravest part of our present duty to Indians is to bring about in each of them that change of character and conduct which shall conform them to the type of good white citizens, and fit them to live under the new conditions that now surround them and upon which they enter under the law of lands in severalty. As rapidly as possible all thought that they are Indians should be laid aside, and they should be regarded simply as our countrymen. For the adults there should be, as now, farmers and mechanics to lead them in work; and all the moral compulsion possible should be used to make them work. Indolence gives sway to the animal part of human nature: it is the parent of vice, degradation and meanness, for Indians as truly as for white people. In their struggle for a livelihood, taxpayers should not be weighted with any unnecessary imposts to sustain Indians who might labor for their own support.

The present system of school education forms a good basis for future work. It should not be ruthlessly remodeled, but developed and perfected. All Indians of proper age should be placed under school discipline.

The schools should chiefly aim to give the knowledge needed at once by the Indians; that is, of numbers, of geography, and of the use of the English language by speaking, reading and writing it. A few only who show unusual ability should receive further instruction to fit them for becoming the intellectual leaders of their people. But these should be especially taught to work, not be lifted even temporarily out of sympathy with their people, perhaps to be left useless or depraved at last.

The Superintendent of Indian Education must almost inevitably find it necessary to spend much of his time at Washington, and will require several assistants, who should each have supervision of a district, visit the schools, and, by coöperation with the agent, do all that may be done by advice and direction to

bring each school up to the highest state of efficiency. These assistants should, whenever practicable, be chosen from among the successful teachers or superintendents of Indian schools. This would insure that they would know what was practicable under the varying conditions of schools on reservations or in the States. From time to time, the Superintendent could visit one of these districts in company with the assistant in charge, learn the state of the schools and perfect plans for the work.

The methods should not be uniform: this would stamp out the individuality of the teacher. The books should not be the same for all schools: this would lead to abuses. But the assistants could easily see that good methods were employed, that no unfit books were continued in use, and that those specially adapted were not omitted. The suggestion of Superintendent Oberly that the superintendents and teachers within a given district should occasionally meet for conference and perfecting of methods is a very good one.

MANUAL TRAINING should be given by all the boarding-schools. Work should be made the mark of honor; self-reliance and self-support the end of ambition.

Manners should receive great attention, and the Indian's native self-respect be made to express itself in a courteous regard for others, notably by men for women. Morals must be sustained by religion, and find in it their highest motives. It is easy for all men to be animal; hard to be morally pure and noble. Even more than most of the white race the Indian has to struggle against hereditary influences in the endeavor to bring his lower instincts under the supremacy of his intellectual, moral and religious nature. Give him, then, the religion of the Bible, which imparts the best moral and religious instruction to be found, and the highest motives conceivable. All Indian schools should make instruction in it a heartfelt duty.

All the kinds of schools now existing are needed. On some reserves where wild Indians are scattered over wide districts, a large number of day schools, giving, perhaps, a mid-day meal, should be established as initiatory to the boarding-schools. The very presence of a suitable man and wife resident in such a school-house near a camp or village of Indians has a civilizing influence.

All who are familiar with the subject recognize the high importance of boarding-schools in Indian education.

The boarding-schools should seldom accommodate more than one hundred pupils. Beyond this the personal influence of a superintendent is likely to be lost, the family element dies out, and an institutional condition comes in, that fails to develop a truly civilized character.

There should be, as now, training schools off the reservations. This insures order in the neighborhood surrounding the school, steepes it in the atmosphere of white civilization, brings the races into a contact necessary to their ultimate commingling, tends to break up the Indian communities, interests the whites in the future of the race and creates public opinion in favor of Indian rights and culture.

The schools conducted under the auspices of the churches should be fostered whether on the reserves or in the States. The plainest dictates of practical statesmanship would lead administrations to encourage the zeal of the religious organizations. They supply farms, buildings and money to aid the Government in its half-accomplished task, while they interest large numbers of citizens in the cause who otherwise would simply attend to their own comfort and give no thought to the Indians, or to the great difficulties the Government finds in its duty to educate every Indian youth. Moreover, the Church can do what the Government cannot do—bring the Indians under the power of Christianity, which, through eighteen centuries, has proved itself the most potent force in civilization.

It will thus be seen that legislation has largely done its part, and that *administration* of Indian affairs now claims the most serious attention. The execution of the laws already enacted will demand the utmost vigilance of the friends of Indian manhood, womanhood and childhood, and all that is possible should be done to aid the Government in its high task,—the transformation of all Indians into Christian American citizens.

JAMES E. RHOADS.

Bryn Mawr, 4, 1, 1887.



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